

Testimony from Andrew Silva
Student, University of Connecticut

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak on the topic of UCONN's affordability. My name is Andrew Silva and I am currently a senior, studying Chemical Engineering at the University of Connecticut. And while I value the last 4 years I've spent at UCONN and feel fully prepared to begin my engineering career, I must admit that UCONN was not my first choice of college. In fact – it was my last.

When I was a junior at Enrico Fermi High School, here in Enfield, I was pretty confident that I wanted to pursue some type of degree that integrated math and science. With this in mind, I started looking at the schools that I felt were the best in the field of engineering. Ultimately, I applied and was accepted to three schools: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and the University of Connecticut.

My first choice was Rensselaer. Yet despite a \$15,000 per year scholarship, my family and I figured out that I would be left with a significant amount of debt after graduation. In contrast, UCONN was much more affordable. And while it wasn't my first choice at that point in time – or even when I arrived freshman year – I can say today, without a doubt, that I would never change my decision to come to UCONN. With the help of in-state tuition and merit scholarships, I will enter the workforce in May, nearly debt free.

Over the last four years, I have been able to conduct undergraduate research, secure two engineering internships and a full time job, and travel to Nicaragua with an organization that uses engineering to help the world's poorest communities. All of this has been possible because UCONN is truly a high caliber, research and learning institution. When combined with its low cost, it isn't surprising that over the past few years, Connecticut's best high school students are choosing UCONN. We've developed a university that is both affordable and high quality – a winning combination that we should preserve for years to come.

I highly recommend that the State of Connecticut continues to foster this university. Tuition and fee hikes truly impact students and their decision to enroll in, or even continue attending, college. As students, we understand that our post-secondary education is an investment; but with an uncertain job market and the overwhelming prospect of debt, it's a tough investment to make.

I look forward to hearing the outcomes of the reports that these proposed bills have mandated. Even after I graduate, I hope that students across the state will come to the same realization that I did; and they will flock to UCONN to receive an exceptional education at a bargain price. Thank you.